(b) if so, how;

(c) whether TRAI is providing genuine level playing field to the industry players; and

(d) how does TRAI compare with the regulators in developed countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (d) The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has been empowered, under the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 to carry out functions as considered appropriate in the Indian conditions. The TRAI Act was amended in the year 2000 to strengthen the entire regulatory framework. TRAI is functioning independently in the discharge of the functions entrusted to it under the TRAI Act. TRAI has informed that it has formulated its regulations, and issued its directions and orders on the principles of non-discrimination and to ensure a level playing field; furthermore, all issues of key importance are decided through an open consultation process involving all stakeholders.

Rural teledensity

208. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the rural teledensity is abysmally low in the villages as compared to urban teledensity indicating that most of the villages are still not connected by telephone;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the private operators have failed to implement their undertaking to extend their infrastructure to rural areas in order to obtain licences; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN) (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As on 31.12.2002 the teledensity in rural areas is 1.42 and urban teledensity is 13.7 and the overall teledensity is 4.88 in the country. A total of 509999 villages are connected by a VPT out of 607491 villages in the country. The remaining villages are planned to be provided with a VPT. VPT status is given in the enclosed Statement (*See* below).

(c) and (d) Earlier the pace for provision of VPTs in rural areas by Private Operators was low which has now picked up. They have been now asked to fulfill their roll-out commitment by 31.3.2003.

Statement

State-wise Status of VPTs as on 31-12-2002

Sl. No.	State	Total No. of villages	Total No. of VPTs provided by BSNL as on 31-12-2002	Total No. of VPTs provided by Private Licencee as on 31-12-2002	Uncovered villages as on 31.12.2002
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Andaman & Nicobar	201	197		4
2	Andhra Pradesh	29460	23419	1314	4727
3	Assam	24685	17691		6994
4	Bihar	41077	38370		2707
5	Jharkhand	31703	26270		5433
6	Gujarat	18125	11214	2894	4017
7	Haryana	#6850	6811		0
8	Himachal Pradesh	16925	16585		340
9	Jammu & Kashmir	6764	4094		2670
10	Karnataka	27066	27060		6
11	Kerala	1468	1468		0
12	Madhya Pradesh	51806	37597	348	13861
13	Chhattisgarh	19720	14633		5087

1	2	3	4	5	6
14	Maharashtra	42467	31541	1140	9786
15	North East I				0
	Meghalaya	5555	1633		3922
	Mizoram	708	603		105
	Tripura	862	748		114
16	North-East II				0
	Arunachal Pradesh	3389	711		2678
	Manipur	2439	751		1688
	Nagaland	1192	803		389
17	Orissa	46989	40314		6675
18	Pujab	12687	12687	734*	0
19	Rajasthan	39483	23858	693	14932
20	Tamil Nadu	17899	17899		0
21	Uttar Pradesh	103396	97123		6273
22	Uttaranchal	15610	11596		4014
23	West Bengal	38347	37369		978
24	Sikkim	427	374		53
25	Delhi	191	191		0
	Total	607491	503610	6389	97453

* In Punjab all the Villages covered are replacement only

\# 39 Villages in Haryana are de-populated

Expansion and development of communication Sector

†209. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been expansion and development in the field of communications in the country as per fixed targets during the last five years;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.